

We claim:

1. Apparatus for processing segments of a continuous flexible web

comprising:

a processing station including web processing components for carrying out an operation upon a segment of the web after the segment is initially fed to the processing station;

a web feeder assembly for successively feeding a stretch of the web while under tension to said processing station for initial placement of said at least one segment of the web at the station, said mechanism being operable to intermittently release tension on the stretch of the web while said at least one segment thereof is at the processing station;

a holder at the processing station for holding each successive segment of the web after the segment is positioned in said initial placement thereof and during at least a part of the time tension is released on the stretch of the web,

said holder being shiftable while continuing to hold said at least one segment of the web at the processing station to allow the held segment to shift relative to and while remaining a part of portions of the web on each side thereof during release of tension on said stretch of the web;

mechanism operably coupled to said holder for selectively shifting the holder in the X direction of feed of the stretch of the web to the processing station, in a Y direction transverse of the X direction of feed of said stretch of the web, and about a  $\theta$  axis of rotation perpendicular to the X and Y axis directions,

said mechanism including adjustment control structure operably connected to the holder for shifting the holder in motion directions selected from the group consisting of motion along said X axis, motion along said Y axis, rotation about said  $\theta$  axis, and simultaneous combinations thereof as required to obtain accurate alignment of the segment of the web with the processing components at said processing station while tension on the stretch of the web is released.

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2. The apparatus of claim 1, each of said segments carrying at least one position-identifying indicium, said positioning means including a reference assembly providing reference data corresponding to the accurate position of each web segment within the station, and means for comparing the location of said segment indicium with said reference data, said comparing means operably coupled with said motive means.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, said reference assembly comprising at least one reference indicium within said station.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, there being a pair of spaced reference indicia within said station.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, said comparing means including a computer controller operably coupled with said reference assembly and said motive means.

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